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ARMED FORCES IN CHINA

Military and security policies have always been one of the most important supports of communist domestic and foreign politics.

Ever since the founding of the Peoples Republic of China, the armed forces have played a decisive role when civilian politicians fought over policy.

In 1949, the five field armies of the People's Army brought the communists to power.
The five commanders divided up China between themselves and established military governments which stayed in power for years.
Military officers formed up to fifty percent of all provincial party secretaries .....
Almost half of the members of the Central Committee were soldiers in 1977. The same thing is true of the politburo.....

China's political leadership has hitherto condemned all attempts at arms control. It has participated in none of the arms control treaties initiated by the Sovjet Union or the United States.
All this despite their being an important power in their own right as most populated nation in the world.
This may have something to do with China's military weakness .....

Just how strong is China?

China's Peoples Liberation Army has 4.45 million troops under arms. The largest army in the world.

The army itself has 3.6 million troops under arms. It's armed reserves number another 5 million. Paramilitary organizations another 4 million. Finally, about 75 to 100 million are organize in the general reserves.

However, the Chinese defense system is poorly armed and equiped in comparison to thes overwhelming numbers.

The army has 121 infantry divisions. However, it only has 12 armored divisions, generally equiped with obso-

lete T-59 and T-62 tank models. Only 3 air cavalry divisions. Only 40 artillery divisions. And, only 15 divisions of engineers.

Available equipment is as follows: 10.000 tanks of Sovjet and Chinese origin, 60 amphibious tanks, 3.500 armored personnel carriers, and 20.000 various artillery pieces.

The Chines/e fleet contains 12 destroyers and 17 frigates, about 65 diesel powered and two atomic submarines. Numerically, the Chinese fleet is the largest in the world. But there is general consensus, that the Chinese Navy was incapable of conducting any larger naval operations beyond immediate coastal defence ..... until 1981. Now, there is a re-orientation.
About 300.000 sailors man Chines ships.

Numerically also, the Chines Airforce is the third largest in the world.
However, the majority of planes at its disposal date from the 50's and are built after obsolete Sovjet models.

The most important independent Chinese development may well be the F-12 fighter. It went into production at the end of 1980 and roughly corresponds to the Sovjet Mig-23.
40.000 men and women serve in the Airforce.

The Chines estimate that their weapons technologie lies approximately 15 year behind that of the USA and the USSR. (The CIA claims a 20 to 25 year technological lag). In order to compensate for this lag in conventional weapons technologie, China began to import foreign armaments.

China obtained the license to build Rolls Royce Spey airplane engines in 1975.
France delivered 13 Super.Frelon helicopters.
Purchase of Britains Harrier VTO is beeing considered.
This in consideration of the sparse number of strategically important bases in Northeast and Northwest China.
Contact with western arms industries has increased.

Negotiations have reached concrete stages in several cases. (French anti-tank rockets, the British Harrier VTO, which the Chinese have been interested in for years). However, finalization of arms deals are not known to date.

The war with North Vietnam may have seemed impressive. But despite proclaimed military successes, it revealed the weaknesses in Chinese military potential. The Polibüro recognized that the Army was unprepared for modern warfare.

The military budget was cut by about 25% towards the end of the Mao era.
More funds immediately flowed in during the post-Mao-era. Quite effectively too, if one is to believe New China news agency: In the beginning of January 1982, it claimed enormous success in the modernization of conventional weapons systems.

That beeing uncertain, one thing is for sure: China possesses a nuclear potential of considerable power. The primary goal of the coutry was and still remeins breaking the nuclear monopoly of the two super-powers.
China has exploded abou 30 nuclear bombs since 1964, testing warheads of various strengths.
One assumes that it has produced several hundred warheads since then.

According to data made available by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London at th beginning of 1981, China has the following delivery systems available to it: 90 mid-range bombers, approximately 50 medium range missiles, 65-85 long range rockets (CS-2) and 4 intercontinental rockets with a range of 6.000 to 7.000 km (CSS-3).
The CSS-4 intercontinental rocket was tested for the first time in May 1980 over its full distance of 13.000 km. The stationing of globally strategic rockets must now be counted on.
Now, Chinese rockets can reach the US mainland, not counting all of the Sovjet territory.

It is interesting to note the finess with which the Chinese politicians play out their military-political cards with both super-powers.
On January 14-1982, the director of the Sovjet Academy

for Foreign Affairs held secret talkes in Peking.
"Protocoll" was the explanation given by both sides.
However, it coincide with American deliveries of weapons to Taiwan.
Chinas relations with America notably cooled under the Reagon administration.
All this possibly reminded the Chinese that they also had a "Russian Card" to play.
However, US-Chinese relations have not cooled that far.
Rumours that the Americans constructed a listening post in China's North area to track rocket tests and other Sovjet military activities have not been contradicted by either the Chinese or the Americans.

In the beginning of 1982, the Supreme Commander of US Forces in the Pacific, Admiral Robert Long, stated in Tokio that Washington would be interested in any offer Peking may have to make the US in regards to US 7th fleet visits to the Chinese port of Dairen (previously Port Arthur).
A few days before that, rumours circulated that Washington and Peking were already conducting secret negotiations about American use of the Dairen harbour.

Despite official differences in policy, the US and China seem to be reaching a modus vivendi over the issue of Taiwan.
For example: No highly developed warplanes to Taiwan.
The President seems to follow the advice of moderate advicers who think that Taiwans current fleet of F-5 E fighter bombers is sufficient for Taiwans defense.

The Russian Card? Or, the construction of a Chinese-American alliance of common strategic interests?

The statistics given here are derived from research papers published ba the highly reknowned Institute for Strategic Studies in London (as of February 1981), and, from General Count Kielmannsegg (One time Supreme Nato Commander for Mid Europe) who conducted a research trip to China by the end fo 1980, and from a research paper which is soon to appear.
According to latest information passed on by foreign diplomats in Peking, the number of soldiers is to be reduced by about a million troops in a complete re-vamping of the armed forces. The number of draftees is ti be reduced. They plan the gradual discharge of old veterans and a better screening of recruits. Military rank is to be reintroduced. And, new uniforms are being issued.

These measures are designed to increase efficientcy, organization and discipline.

The reports sound believable. The Chinese General Chief of Staff, Yan Dezhi, said the following a few weeks ago in indirect reference to the USSR: "The Peoples Liberation Army faces a highly modernized, well trained, and powerful enemy.
More than a 'higher morale' is needed against it, but also the knowledge of how to handle modern weapons".

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